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Indo-Egyptian Relations: A Historical Perspective

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This paper is a modest attempt to draw a short history of Indo-Egyptian relations in the post-colonial era. It also tries to explain why such relations flourished during 1950s and 1960s and cooled off after that. Historically, Indo-Egyptian relations lasted for millennia. It started indirectly in Iraq, which was a middle way between India and Egypt. By the fifth century B.C, the direct contact between the two nations through sea was established. Two century later, the trade between Egypt and India flourished and the rulers of Egypt set up a government body to look after trade with India. The empires industry brought the two countries much closer economically and politically, as they became a part of the same political entity. This stands true except for the British Empire that worked hard to isolate the two peoples. During the medieval times, parts of India and Egypt became a part of the Islamic world where free trade and travel were guaranteed. The civilzational heritage of the two nations was absorbed in a kind of universal civilization that Islam and Arab culture shaped its frame but not its content. During this period, the flow of ideas and teachers, learners faced no barriers. Inside Egypt, the momentum of trade with India created a full class of the merchants who traded with India. They became powerful economically and therefore politically. This flourished trade went on until the Portuguese appeared at the Indian Ocean in 1498. A military alliance between Egypt and the Zamorin of Gujarat and the rulers of Kerala failed in neutralizing the Portuguese threat. The new threat turned to be fatal with its ambitions crossing the economic motivation and targeting the political independence of both India and Egypt.

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Indo-Egyptian Relations: A Historical Perspective

By Dr.El Sayed Mekkawi*

The need for strengthening, deepening and widening the relations between Egypt and India is very essential for the benefit of both Egypt and India as well as the world peace. It was Nasser and Nehru along with their friend Marshal Tito who worked to reduce the tension of cold war and build peace zone between the two conflicting blocs. In 1949, Asaf Fyzee, India's ambassador to Egypt wrote in his annual report to Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) that

"Egypt is the most important country in the Middle East .it is the half-way house between Europe and India, physically, culturally, and politically. The history of its freedom movement has many affinities with that of India. In both cases, it was British that was the principal exploiting power and it is with Britain that Egypt is still vitally concerned."[1]

After 55 years , Rajendra Singh, India's ambassador to Egypt asserted that Asaf's "affinities "is still relevant for today but called it "unique commonalty" . In 2004 Singh wrote:

> "Two of the oldest civilizations, India and Egypt share a historic relationship nursed both by their leadership as well as friendship between the two peoples. It continues to strengthen with the support of the highest political leadership in both countries and is reflected in the economic and cultural domains, with bilateral trade taking a quantum leap and the cultural side having seen resurgence. Both countries share a unique commonalty rooted in more than five millennia of civilisational history and cultural heritage. We are both ancient nations and young democracies. Together with like-minded nations, we represent the aspirations of people around the world committed to peace, development and freedom."[2]

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[1] Secret Annual Report No.A-92/50 of Ambassador Asaf Fyzee to MEA, National Archives of India, Delhi.

[2] http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/print/2004/705/op8.htm

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This Paper will draw a brief review of the development of Indo-Egyptian relations since 1947 up till today. The paper will also assess these relations by attempting to answer the two questions: where these relations are standing today and why it is so?

India and Egypt represent ancient civilizations that have enriched humankind culture with their invaluable contributions to the sciences and the arts, as well as to philosophical thought from the third millennium BC.

The huge geographical distance separating them appears not to have deterred the forging of relations between the two countries, over two thousand years ago, in the second century BC, when an Indian sailor lay abandoned on the seashore of the Red Sea; he was taken to the state authorities in Alexandria. In return of permission to go back safely to his native land he offered to let somebody see the direct sea route to India. Thus, a tremendous exchange cemented bonds between the civilizations of India and Egypt. [3]

From time immemorial Egyptian and Indian ports have fallen within the scope of the chief caravan routes leading to the important harbours of the Near and Middle East. Starting from the last decades of the sixth century BC, however, one begins to hear of attempts of a more defined nature to link the coasts of the two countries.

During the reign of the Persian king, Darius I (520-480 BC), a convoy of ships was commissioned first to explore the mouth of the Indus River and, thereafter, the possibilities in the Red Sea in Egypt. The same period witnessed the completion of a canal, started about a century earlier, with the

[3] For more details on the multi-faceted rapport which linked Egypt with India in ancient times see Saryu Doshi and Mostafa El Abbadi , India and Egypt : Influences and Interactions, Marg Publication , New Delhi ,1993 .

aim of linking the north-western tip of that sea with the Nile. Later, Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) founded Alexandria, led an expedition to India and sent naval convoys to explore the: coasts of Arabia. Though these efforts obviously fitted within a much broader policy of territorial expansion on the part of the Persian and the Macedonian monarchs, their significance should not be lost. For, they singled out the geographical and historical position of both Egypt and India as the two main, if not indeed indispensable, posts on the trade routes linking the Far East to the Mediterranean and the West.

However, the first definitive steps towards enhancing trade relations between Egypt and India were taken during the Hellenistic age ushered in by the death of Alexander and the division of his empire among his generals. The founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty, Ptolemy I, Soter (305-283 BC), had more than just an ordinary acquaintance with India. He had taken a prominent part in Alexander's Indian expedition and his account of that expedition - included in his memoirs - reveals a firsthand knowledge of the Indus Valley and the territories adjoining it. [4] It was in this period (300 BC) when emperor Ashok sent a Buddhist mission to Alexandria.[5]

From the Egyptian port of Berenike on Red Sea, Egypt conducted trade with Africa, Arabia and India. The biggest ships sailed to and from India to satisfy the overwhelming demands for spices in the Mediterranean world. Alexandrian traders who wanted to increase their shares in Indian trade. They realised that they must by themselves sail directly across the Indian Ocean to get access to the Indian markets and bring cargos of demand back to Egypt. Ptolemy VIII – an Egyptian Pharaoh and a great friend of Rome was the biggest patron for the Alexandrian traders to undertake this risky venture through the pirate-frequented Indian Ocean. Soon an important office of administration was created to facilitate this maritime trade with India. The office was named 'Commander of the Red and Indian Seas', under Ptolemy

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[4] Lutfi A.W.Yehya , Trade Relations ,in Saryu Doshi and Mostafa El Abbadi ,n.3, p.53

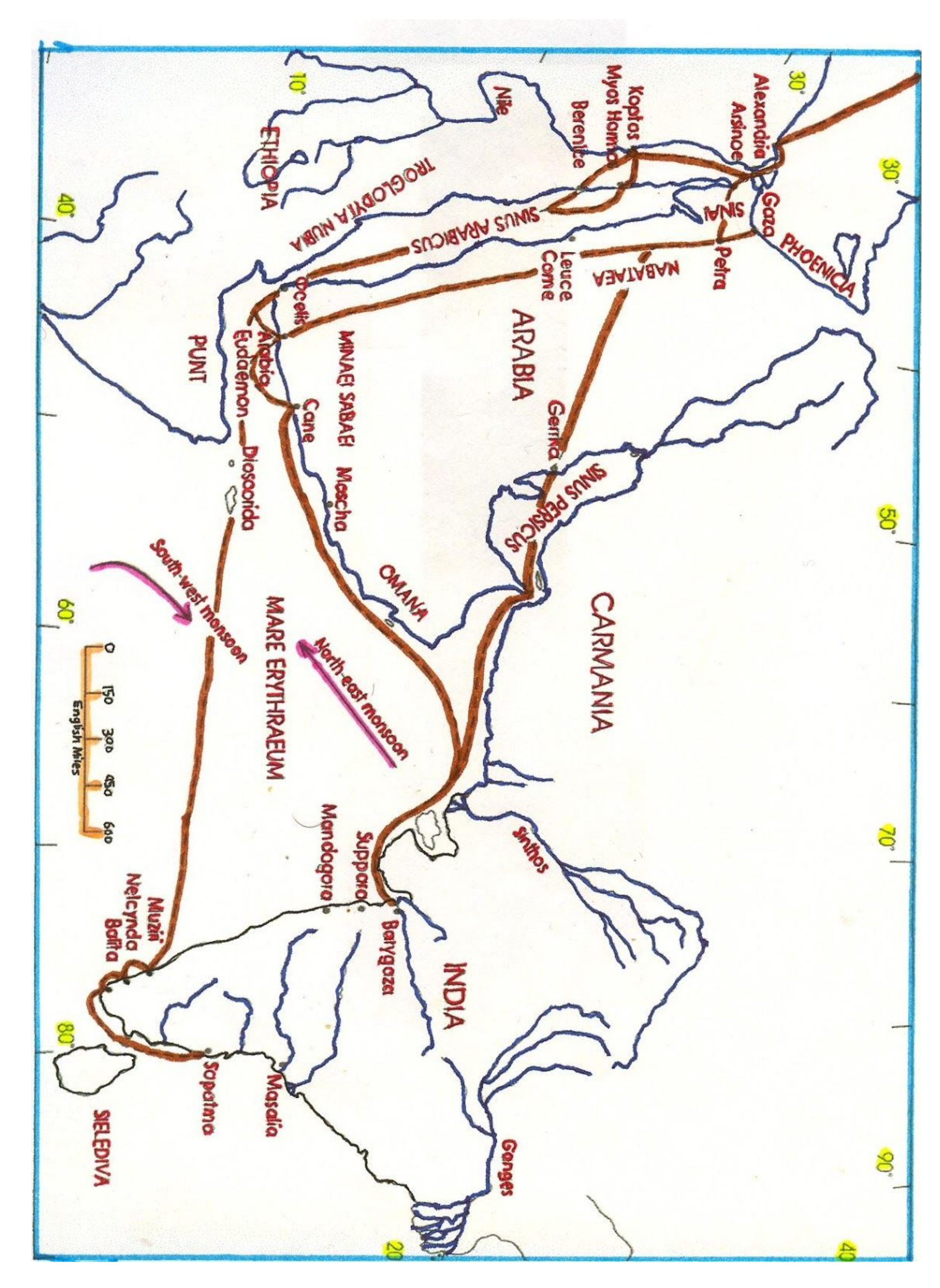
[5] K.M.Pannikar, India and Egypt, in India Press Office (cairo): Al Hind wal Sharq Al Awsat [India and Middle East], n.d , p.19 .

XII, nicknamed Auletes (80 – 51 B.C.). This perhaps increased Egypt's commercial interaction with India. [6]

Indo-Egyptian relations have survived the vicissitudes of history and subsisted on trade and Commerce and carried the culture of the two people along with this trade, as well as interrupted diplomatic contacts. During medieval times, there were considerable .diplomatic relations and a prosperous commercial trade as well as cultural cross flow which articulated itself in the concept, design, and iconography of several artifacts from both countries. Such mutual interchange extended to the design of Egyptian mosque minarets which appear to have been inspired by Indian architecture and to the presence of Egyptian pictorial plans in Indian miniature painting.

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[6] http://www.simaqianstudio.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=3831dia.



Egyptian-Indian Trade Routes in Hellenistic and Roman Times

Source: Lutfi A.W.Yehya , Trade Relations ,in Saryu Doshi & Mostafa El Abbadi , India and Egypt : Influences and Interactions,

Marg Publication, New Delhi, 1993 p.54.

An intellectual transmission of ideas and theories in the fields of astronomy and astrology inspired research and discovery. The quest for knowledge was equally keen; each tradition-locked land was eager to take out the best the other had to offer. The travel of Indian scientists to Egypt to settle there and sometimes hold positions in the state and vice versa was a common practice. [7]

There was a separate wing called “Al Rewaq Al Hindi” for Indian students who studied in Al Azhar as it is shown in the Egyptian records of Ottoman era.

The fact that an Indian trader of Calicut, called Khuja Anbr owned a commercial fleet in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, which used to trade in regular basis between Egyptian and the Indian ports. The commercial houses of Calicut and other Indian trade centers used to have branches in Cairo and Alexendria.[8]

Geniza documents of the Egyptian Jewish community show how Fatimid Fustat (The Islamic capital of Egypt) was the nerve-center for a global trade network which linked the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean : the merchandise that flowed through its bazaars came from as far afield as East Africa ,southern Europe, the western Sahara ,India, China and Indonesia.

Interestingly, one member of the Egyptian Jewish community is considered to have been one of the finest minds of the Middle Ages: the great doctor, scholar and philosopher Musa ibn Maimun, known as Maimonides.

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[7] For more details on the historical ties between Egypt and India see Saryu Doshi and Mostafa El Abbadi , n.3 ; and Ahmed, S. Maqbul, Indo – Arab relations with the Arab world from Ancient up to Modern Times. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969.

[8] K.M.Pannikar, n.5, p.21 .

Like so many others in his community, he too had close familial links with the India Trade.[9]

These old-age flourishing commercial relations came under attack from the new emerging European colonialism during the early years of 16th century. In defending these commercial relations and Indian independence, Egyptians and Indians fought together against Portuguese invaders in Goa and Du. Mamluk Egypt sent a campaign under the leadership of Amir Heussin in 1507 and later Ottoman Egypt sent another campaign under the leadership of Sulyman Pasha Al Khadem .However, the Indo-Egyptian alliance failed to stop European Invasion and the trade routes between the two countries collapsed.[10]

This was the beginning of Western efforts to dominate India. By 1857, India became British colony. British occupied Egypt in 1882 to capture Suez Canal and to secure their way to India. The common experience of foreign occupation created the first bonds of friendship between India and Egypt in the modern era. At some of its earliest annual conferences, the Indian National Congress (INC) adopted resolutions opposing the dispatch of Indian troops to the Arab territories under British control including the Suez Canal zone. Among the earliest Indian leaders who visited Egypt was Dwarkanath Tagore in 1845, the grandfather of the Nobel Laureate Gurdev Rabindranath Tagore. During the period of Egyptian and Indian national struggles for independence, there were numerous instances of fruitful contacts between the political leaders of the two countries.

In 1927, Jawaharlal Nehru participated in the Conference of Oppressed Nationalities in Brussels which left a deep impression on him brought him into personal contacts with the leaders of the freedom struggles in various

[9] Amitav Gosh ,In An Antique Land ,Ravi Dayal, New Delhi,1992,pp.37,56-7.

[10] K.M.Pannikar , n.5, p.22-3

countries. In his report to the Indian National Congress on the Conference, Nehru proposed that India establish direct contacts with the nationalist organizations in Asia. The Congress welcomed the proposal and decided to hold a session of a Pan-Asiatic Federation In India sometime in 1930. It also sent out letters of invitations to the nationalist organizations of Tunisia, Egypt and Palestine inviting fraternal delegations to the annual Congress sessions.[11]

Nehru in his speech to welcome Egyptian Wafd delegation referred to the unique relationship which link Egypt with India

"It has been a great privilege for us to welcome in India the distinguished members of the Wafd Party in Egypt, who have come here to represent their great national organisation as well as the Egyptian people. We welcomed them as our distinguished guests, but there was something more to our welcome for they came to us as emblems of the spirit of nationalism and freedom from Egypt. We, in India, who have ourselves been imbued by this spirit and have built up a great organisation to embody that spirit and the struggle against a dominating imperialism for the freedom of our people, found ourselves completely in tune with alike sentiment in Egypt. Our peoples had much in common close intercourse from the dawn of history, the exchange, even in remote ages past, of ideas and cultures and merchandise, and then, in the modern period of history, a common struggle for freedom against a common imperialism."[12]

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[11] G.S. Bhargava, India-U.A.R. Relations , an Assessment , People's Publishing House ,New Dehi,pp.4-6.

[12] Jagdish P Sharma, Indo- Egyptian Relations : The Kashmir Factor, in Riyaz Punjabi and AK Pasha, India and Islamic World , Radiant Publishers,1998,pp96-97.

Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru and others maintained a line of personal communication with the Egyptian nationalist leaders like Saad Zaghlul Pasha and others.

In the “thirties and forties” of the 20th century when Egypt passed through great upheavals and the Egyptian nationalist movement was faced with a corrupt monarchy on the one hand and a decadent and self-seeking political leadership on the other, leaders of the INC never failed to adopt a sympathetic attitude to Egypt’s urge to free itself from colonial domination and exploitation of all kinds by their supporters in Egypt. India and Egypt were bounded by their common urge to free themselves from British tutelage, as exemplified by the visit of Wafdist delegation to Mahatma Gandhi aboard the ship S.S. Rajputana on his way to London through Suez Canal for the Second Round Table Conference in 1931. [13]

The Indian leader also received telegrams welcoming him to Egypt from Wafd Party leader Mustafa El- Nahhas and Safiyya Zaghlul, wife of the late Egyptian nationalist leader.The gifts the Egyptian reception committee presented to the Indian leader were most unusual for what was tantamount to a state visit. One was a vessel of honey inscribed with the Qur'anic verse: "From their bellies comes variegated coloured syrup that contains a curative for people." A second gift was a large, grey, camel-wool shawl "to protect the leader from the cold during his stay in the British capital". Finally, Gandhi was presented with 20 litres of goat milk and a large quantity of dates -- Egyptian, not imported. Among these, a special package was prepared of the famous Egyptian red dates, known as zaghlul, "because of the significance of the name".

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[13]G.S. Bhargava, n.11,pp.4-6.

In his message to Egyptian people, Mahatma Gandhi addressed Egyptian people through Al Ahram newspaper:

"You, like us, are an ancient people. I pray that you do not blindly imitate everything Western. If I have properly understood what has happened to your country you must persist in your endeavours to realise true freedom. And, if I may hazard a modest opinion, it is that Egypt will attain its liberty very quickly if India obtains its true freedom within the next 12 months. I firmly believe that if India gains its freedom through sincere perseverance and without violence this will have a great effect on the world and certainly for all the nations of the East."[14]

In mid-December, Gandhi embarked on his return trip to India. It was hoped that when he arrived in Port Said he would make a brief trip to Cairo, towards which end Mustafa El-Nahhas delegated a senior Wafd aide, Mahmoud Fahmi El-Nuqrashi, to meet the Indian leader and escort him to the capital. A detailed programme was also drawn up for the visit but British authorities prevented the visit to take place as it was going to empower Egyptian national struggle movement against them.[15]

In his first broadcast to the nation as leader of the Indian Interim Government in 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his desire for the closest possible relationship between independent India and the Arab nations including Egypt. In the late 1940's, Egypt and other Arab countries were confronted with the British policy of divide and dominate in the shape of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. India supported the Palestinians in defense of their right to their own homeland. At the United Nations, India played a leading role in obtaining a settlement acceptable to the Arabs, especially the Palestinians though unsuccessfully. Thus, the first bonds of comradeship between Independent India and Egypt as well as the entire Arab world were forged in the crucible of the Palestine crisis.[16]

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[14] AlAhram Weekly , 19 - 25 December 2002

[15] Ibid.

[16] Faiz Abu-Jaber, the development of Indo-Egyptian relations,Indian Political science Review,Vol.4,no.2,April.septemeber 1970,pp.157-70

Egypt was one of the countries with which independent India first established diplomatic relations in 1947. Moreover, Egypt signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with India on 5 April 1955. Since then, both India and Egypt have been striving to consolidate the hard-won freedom and develop themselves economically without interference from outside. Here again the common aspiration for economic progress and political consolidation brought the two peoples together. It is undoubtedly true that the leading personalities of both India and Egypt played a great part in cementing these ties. Soon Jawaharlal Nehru and Gamal Abdel Nasser became close friends, sharing a common outlook and a burning passion for freedom and progress and also opposition to oppression and colonial exploitation. [17]

The quality of friendship which linked the two leaderships was described on Krishna Menon’s words after Nasser’s death.

“It has been my privilege to be acquainted with and to know the late President (Nasser) very closely during all the eighteen years of his regime. It has also been my privilege to be involved with him in common causes and policies. My friendship with him, developed in the days of common endeavour, was maintained without reserve. President Nasser extended his affection to those who were involved in common causes. His personal relations were not temporary or superficial. I have had the privilege of the President’s friendship even after I was no longer a representative or part of our Government.”[18]

Indo-Egyptian relations were developed and nourished on the basis of a mutuality of interests and similarity of actions and reactions to a variety of challenges (domestically and globally) to both the countries.[19] Chief among these is the question relating to the partition of India by the British like in Palestine on the basis of religion. This principal reflected itself in Egypt’s policy towards the partition of India and Kashmir dispute. Egyptians advised Jinnah not to go for partition and the Wafd party sent a delegation to meet Jinnah in an attempt to convince him avoiding partition. Regarding Kashmir,

[17] Ibid.
[18] Al Arab, October-November 1970.
[19] Faiz Abu-Jaber,n.15 ,pp.157-70.

Egypt position remained since 1947 one of strict neutrality as to keep balance between friendly India and Muslim Pakistan. In a rare move, Egyptian government requested in highly diplomatic language from The Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar that it will be highly appreciated if the respected Ulamas can avoid giving any statements on Kashmir, which may bring tensions for friendly Indo-Egyptian relations. [20]

This Egyptian policy disturbed Pakistan and this anger expressed itself in what Dawn wrote in 1956 accusing Nasser of being anti-Pakistan:

"Nasser's hatred of Pakistan and love of Bharat and its Nehru is an attitude of mind not warranted by facts but conditioned by intense bias and blind prejudice the source of which may well be examined by psychiatrists. It is nevertheless a matter of deep regret that in the veins of this turbulent egoist not the blood of Islam should seem to flow but the turbid waters of Nile. Nasser will never be our friend; he will never think in terms of Islam."[21]

Another major issue aside from secularism, which created a mutuality of interests, and hence nourished good Indo-Egyptian relations, was the issue of non-aligned foreign policy and opposition of both countries to military pacts. Indian leaders committed themselves at an early stage of their independence (and also before) to the ideal and practice of following a non-aligned foreign policy in the post second world war period, especially in the wake of the cold war. Egyptian freedom movement was also against any Egyptian involvement in the Second World War and later opposed all British and Western defence

[20] El Sayed Mekkawi, Mesr wa Kashmir :Derasa tarikhyia fe Diplomasiat Al Azmat (1950-1951) [Egypt and Kashmir, a historical study in the diplomacy of crises, 1950-1951]", the proceedings of the 5th annual conference of crises and catastrophes' management, 28-29 October, 2000, Ain Shams University, Cairo, 2000, vol. 4,pp.193-225.; see also MS Agawani, India ,Pakistan and West Asia, International Studies ,Vol.8,Nos.1-2,July-October 1966,p.159 ; S.B.Farajullah, Egypt and the Kashmir Dispute in Girijesh Pant (ed.),Indo-Egyptian perspectives Global and regional concerns ,SIS, JNU, New Delhi,1999,pp.107-126; A letter from Egyptian Foreign Minister to the Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar on 20th November 1950,File 139/142/9, Mahfaza 1573, The new Archive of foreign Ministry , Dar AlWathaq AlQawmyia

[21] Quoted by Jagdish P Sharma, Indo- Egyptian Relations : The Kashmir Factor, in Riyaz Punjabi and AK Pasha (ed.), India and Islamic World , Radiant Publishers,1998,p.107

projects in Middle East. Undoubtedly Indian policy made considerable impact on the policies of the newly independent Asian and African nations including Egypt since the Second World War. Indian ambassador Pannikar and many meetings between Nehru and Nasser convinced the latter that positive neutralism is the best option to be followed in foreign policy.

Egypt became a major Afro-Asian country adhering to the policy of non-alignment, under the revolutionary leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser and other free officers since 1952. Egyptian adherence to the philosophy of non-alignment and opposition to the creation of military pacts in West Asia and elsewhere cemented the bond of friendship between Egypt and India. The Bandung Conference of April 1955 was the high point of Indo-Egyptian relations. Nasser and Nehru played active role in the Bandung Conference, which witnessed political battles between Pro-west and Pro-Afro-Asian solidarity, and had it not been for the efforts of Nasser, Nehru and Chou-En-Lai, it would have failed. The Indo-Egyptian participation in the conference was an indication that Egypt and India could play a positive role in world affairs and it could also set an example for fellow third world countries.

On his homeward journey Nasser stopped in New Delhi. He told Dewan Berindranath, an Indian journalist that his visit to Delhi

"…proved a turning point in my political understanding. I learnt and realized that the only wise policy for us would be of positive neutrality and non-alignment. Coming back home, I found out from the response it had , that it is the only possible policy which could get the broadest possible support from the Arab people."[22]

Nasser had a high regard for Nehru's diplomatic skills and experience and they, along with President Tito of Yugoslavia became the leading figures in the Non-aligned Movement. In 1956, the three leaders met

[22] Karanjia,R.K, The Arab Dawn,Bombay,1958, p.187.

in Birioni Island, Yugoslavia, to discuss the world situation, the future of Non-aligned movement, and their trilateral relations. The close relationship between Egypt and India is evident from the regular meetings between Nasser and Nehru .The two leaders met each other about 19 times within one decade in Cairo, New Delhi and at NAM meetings and also at other conferences around the world.

The first major challenge against Non-aligned movement came in 1956, when Israel, France and Britain carried out their attack against Egypt in response to the nationalization of Suez Canal by Nasser. Israel launched military operations in Sinai and then Britain and France landed their forces in the Suez Canal zone. The main goal was to reoccupy the Suez Canal and Egypt and destroy the regime of Nasser and give a blow to the non-aligned movement. India's policy was to seek a peaceful resolution, which would safeguard the legitimate interests of the users of the canal without detracting from the sovereign rights of Egypt. Although Nehru was surprised at Nasser's sudden decision to nationalize the Suez Canal but he supported Nasser during the entire crisis.

When Israel, Britain and France attacked Egypt, Nehru was shocked at the violent turn of events. Nehru publicly condemned the aggressors and branded their aggression as a case of "clear naked aggression "and "reversion to the past colonial methods "[23].

The logic behind India's position during the crisis has been explained by Nehru when he wrote to Nasser in 1956:

> "If colonialism succeeds in coming back to Egypt, it will reverse the entire course of history and return to every other country from which it had been forced to go Therefore…. colonialism should not be allowed to

[23] AK Pasha, India and West Asia: Continuity and Change, Cyan Sagar Publications, Delhi, 1999, p.132.

succeed in Egypt. Otherwise it will signal a new and long fight for the whole of Asia and Africa. "[24]

The Suez crisis was the golden point in Indo-Egyptian relations and left the latter very strong and solid. Egypt, which was grateful for Indian support during the Suez crisis, got the chance to express its gratitude for Indian people during the discussion of Kashmir issue in UN in 1957 and 1958, when western powers encouraged Pakistan to raise the issue in UN to put pressure on India for its pro-Egypt role in the Suez crisis. Egypt adopted a sympathetic approach towards India both at the UN and Arab league and other forums. Other opportunities were the liberation of Goa in 1961 and also at India-China conflict in 1962. Meanwhile, India continued to support Arab nationalism, which was championed by Nasser. It hailed the formation of United Arab Republic (UAR) between Syria and Egypt in 1958, the success of progressive nationalist forces in bringing change of power in Iraq also in 1958. This was another victory to Arab nationalism, which put an end to the Iraqi membership in the much despised Baghdad pact, which represented a threat to the security of Egypt as well as India and others. In the same context, India supported the other causes of Arab nationalism such as freedom struggle of North African Arab countries including the Algerian revolution.

After failing to solve the Goa issue by peaceful means, India decided to liberate Goa from Portuguese colonialism on December 18, 1961. Egypt endorsed the Indian viewpoint without any reservations. The Portuguese government, in a last desperate attempt to retain its control over Goa planned to rush naval ships loaded with arms and ammunition towards the Arabian Sea but the Egyptian authorities promptly seized the naval vessels when they tried to pass through the Suez Canal. [25] Egypt supported India's cause at the UN before and after the Indian military action to liberate Goa. It is pertinent to

[24] Ayub Syed: India and the Arab world, Orient Publishers,New Delhi , 1965, p.25.
[25] Najma Heptulla, Indo-West Asian Realtions : The Nehru Era, Allied Publishers , New Delhi ,1991,p.189

note that the Goa issue had became a source of tension in Portuguese-Egyptian relations since 1954, the year in which Egypt started to represent the Indian interests in Goa, Daman and Diu. Interestingly, Egypt reformulated its policy towards each country on the basis of its adopted position vis-à-vis Egypt during the Suez crisis. According to this criterion, Portugal had very low profile as it supported the tripartite aggression against Egypt during the Suez crisis.

In 1962, the second biggest challenge against Non-aligned movement was directed against India by Chinese communism. The Chinese aggression was a direct challenge for Bandung's spirit and principals. Nasser was shocked by the Indo-Chinese conflict. He asked Prime Minister Nehru if he (Nehru) would like him (Nasser) to keep in touch with both sides and to mediate. Nehru promptly approved the suggestion.[26] Presumably a similar suggestion was made to Peking and with identical result[27] Nasser sent his special envoy Ali Sabri to mediate between India and China in order to settle the dispute peacefully. Egyptian efforts along with other non-aligned countries succeeded in bringing the conflict to an end. Chinese leadership was not pleased with the Egyptian role and considered the Egyptian mediation as pro-India.

Non-official reactions in Egypt were practically insignificant. It was only after the Chinese rejection of the mediation move by Egypt that the government controlled press began to offer, muffled criticism of Chinese aggression, and AlGoumohriya for the first time, applied the term "aggressor" to China. Ihsan 'Abdul-Quddus, editor of RoZal Yusif, criticized the Soviet Union for continuing its arms supplies to China, while were holding the shipment of MIG aircraft to India. Then followed Hasanayn Haykal's article in Al-Ahram proclaiming that the Arabs were neither interested in technical arguments over the McMahon Line nor prepared to take sides; and added

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[26] Statesman (Delhi),5 January 1963,cited by M.S.Agwani, The Reactions of West Asia and the UAR,, International Studies, vol.V,No1-2,July-October 1963,pp.75-79.

[27] M.S.Agwani, The Reactions of West Asia and the UAR, International Studies, vol.V, No1-2, July-October 1963, pp.75-79.

“What really interests them is to see this fight stop at once and each side return to the positions occupied before the fighting started. This would open the door for sound negotiations between the two countries." Haykal then added that if China said that this was precisely what India wanted, “let it be so. Isn't this logical and reasonable? [28] Haykal was personal friend and an advisor for Nasser as well as being journalist.

Nehru, who was deeply affected by the Chinese aggression passed away in 1964. In the death of Nehru, the architect of India’s foreign policy, Nasser lost a dear friend. But both had established solid foundations for Indo-Egyptian relations, which remained the basis of India’s West Asia Policy for the coming decades.

From 1962 on, both India and Egypt, unfortunately, soon got heavily involved in developments in their own region, particularly in facing crisis from abroad, as India faced the Chinese invasion in 1962 and the UAR (Egypt and Syria) faced the Israeli aggression in 1967, which resulted in occupying Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, Syrian Golan Heights, Palestinian West Bank and Gaza strip. Nasser became knee-deep in rebuilding the Egyptian Army to free Sinai from the Israeli occupation. Both India and Egypt tried to help each other in their own ways, as Nasser had helped in formulating the Colombo proposals to bring about an end of hostilities between India and China, Indira Gandhi condemned strongly the Israeli aggression against Arab states including Egypt. Her visit to Cairo was a clear signal of Indian support for Egyptian people in their struggle to liberate their occupied land and to establish a solid and just peace in Middle East. Egyptian Media wrote highly and gratefully about India’s support. [29]

The death of Nasser took away something definite though intangible from the special relationship that was evolving between Egypt and India. In

[28] Ibid.
[29] AK Pasha ,n.22, p.134.

the era of Sadat certainly relations with India lost the special quality which characterizing them in the earlier phase, not than India developed any dispute with Egypt, nor was Sadat unfavourable to India. However, the old warmth of Indo-Egyptian relations was not maintained in the new situation. [30]

The lack of warmth was due to a set of factors. One of these factors was the absence of Nehru in 1964 and the coming of Shastri who was not passionate of Indo-Egyptian relations to the extent that Heikal blamed him for the cooling of these relations. Another factor was the absence of Nasser in 1970 and the coming of Sadat who did not feel comfort with Nasser's classical friends such as Soviet and India as the friends of these powers inside Egypt did not favour Sadat to remain as Egypt's president. An additional factor was the negative impact of two crises in 1970 and 1973. Sadat who was once the General Secreatry of Islamic Conference in 1950s did not accept the Indian intervention in the internal politics of Eastern Pakistan (this position was common among the leaders of Muslim countries). He also delayed the recognition of Bangladesh.

During October war 1973, India supported Egypt politically but refused to comply with Egypt's request for MIG spare parts during the military operations.[31]

However, the two countries continued their friendly relations but the momentum of Nasser-Nehru era was declining. President Sadat during his February 1974 visit to India had discussions with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on a wide range of current world affairs, particularly those in West Asia. He declared that he was in "complete accord" with India on all outstanding international economic or political issues. He also completely shared the view that though India was not a Muslim country, with a population of 60 million

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[30] http://www.india-emb.org.eg/Section%209/India-Egypt%20Bilateral%20Jan,03.htm

[31] AK Pasha,n.22, p.135.

Muslims it should have been invited to the Islamic Summit in Lahore (1974) as an observer.[32]

The next year witnessed the visit of Indian President to Egypt. President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed payed a visit to the thousand year-old prestigious Al-Azhar University. During this visit he called upon the Egyptian people not to be carried away by any anti-India propaganda by interested parties about the treatment of Muslims in India. Addressing a vast audience, President Ahmed said that although India was divided on the basis of religion, the country chose secularism and all communities were treated alike. The President rightly emphasized that in secular India Muslims not only had opportunities but had actually risen to high positions in many walks of life. Partition at the time of Independence left what was one nation into two - a theocratic state and a secular country. That the latter has been more enlightened in its treatment of minorities and in its spirit of tolerance is a fact of history, to which Fakruddin Ali Ahmed referred with just pride. That Islamic institution has been well preserved and given all encouragement is a matter for satisfaction. The Sheikh of "Al Azhar" Dr. Abdel Halim Mahmoud, who visited India to attend the Islamic Conference in Lucknow, also spoke warmly of this aspect. The Sheikh reiterated that all places of Islamic culture were well preserved and that the Muslims enjoyed complete freedom in the performance of the ritual of Islam and the propagation of its principles. [33]

With President Hosni Mubarak coming to power in 1981, the trend in Indo-Egyptian relations improved and has undergone a sea change in his early years. President Mubarak, after coming to power in 1981, made efforts

[32] Jagdish P Sharma,n.20, p.107.
[33] Ibid ,p.108

to further enhance the friendly relations between the two countries. He visited India in 1982 and again in 1983 to attend the NAM Summit. [34]

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, on his visit to Egypt in June 1985, shared with President Hosni Mubarak, the need for further strengthening the bonds. President Mubarak said that the role played by the Non-Aligned Movement figured prominently as "a distinctive feature of contemporary international relations. In the aftermath of these visits the first meeting of the Indo-Egyptian Joint Commission was held in Delhi in November 1985. Economic cooperation which had suffered during the Sadat period has picked up considerably.

In a message to the joint seminar on "Nehru, Tito and Nasser: Non-Alignment and the Contemporary World", President Mubarak said that the three founding fathers of the movement were "instrumental in the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement which has made a significant contribution to the cause of world peace and human dignity". He added: "The Non-Aligned Movement, the largest peace movement on earth, is as relevant to our world of today as it was when it was first conceived. When we recall the roles played by the great leaders Nasser, Nehru and Tito, we in no way forget the legacy and the genuine contributions of other leaders and statesmen. . . [they] with their combined efforts helped to turn swords into ploughshares and make better world for generations to come", President Mubarak said. Reaffirming the principles of nonalignment, Amre Moussa, the Egyptian Foreign Minister said: "We in Egypt believe that the essence of the NAM and its principles will continue to exist because they are the true expressions of well established rules in international relations; it is important to keep them and we should reaffirm our commitment. To keep up the dynamics of the Non-aligned Movement, we must respond to the needs of development and proceed at the same pace as the world surrounding us."[35]

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[34] http://www.india-emb.org.eg/Section%209/India-Egypt%20Bilateral%20Jan,03.htm

[35] Jagdish P Sharma,n.20,pp 101-2.

The renewal of Egyptian position on Kashmir came from the Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali during his visit to India in August 1991. He favoured a bilateral solution to the problems between India and Pakistan. He preferred the two countries to deal directly between themselves and "avoid any kind of internationalization of disputes" or "intervention of an international organization". While parrying a question on the resolution on Kashmir adopted at the OIC meet in Istanbul, Dr. Boutros-Ghali pointed out that when the OIC meet was held last in Cairo, his country, which was the host, could exercise some moderating influence. It was not able to do so in Istanbul. "We try to avoid interference in the internal affairs of other countries", he said. In any case, there was no need to attach "too much importance" to such resolutions.[36]

However, the positive impact of Ghali statement has disappeared as a result of the tragic happenings at Ayodhya (Ram Janambhumi-Babri Masjid issue). The incident raise the anger on mostly all Muslim countries including Egypt .A formal declaration was made by Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Mussa. This declaration was not perceived well by the Indian authorities. Amre Mussa "denounced the demolition of Babri mosque and the ensuing clashes there". He expressed his confidence that the Indian authorities would be able to regain control of the situation there and put an end to the sacrilege against the sanctity of the site. He also called on all concerned parties "to ensure respect of places of worship." Amre Mussa "hailed the decision by the Indian authorities to rebuild the mosque and bring all those who destroyed the Babri mosque to book. This would demonstrate India's resolve to keep up responsibility and right to freedom and respect to their deeds.[37]

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[36] Ibid, p.109.

[37] Ibid ,p.109-110.

In the context of Indian diplomatic efforts to deal with side effects of Babri Mosque events and the crisis in Gulf, External Affairs Minister Madhavsinh Solanki visited Egypt in 1992. A joint communiqué issued at the end of the Four-day visit said both countries agreed that the recent transformation in the international situation had not eased the basic and fundamental problems of economic development faced by a large number of countries.

India and Egypt were also concerned about ensuring geo-political security by creating conditions conductive to progress, stability and peace in South Asia and West Asia in particular and the world in general, the communiqué said.

In another meeting with R.L. Bhatia, Minister of State for External affairs, The Egyptian president emphasized the need for greater bilateral interaction between India and Egypt. He also underlined the importance of better coordination between the two countries on the international issues.

India conferred the 1995 Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding on President Mubarak to express India's appreciation his efforts to bring a peace in Middle East.[38]

The two leaderships kept exchanging the visits. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited Egypt in 1995 and his successor I.K.Gujaral visited Cairo in 1997. Egyptian Foreign minister Amre Moussa visited India in April 1997 to attend the NAM ministerial meeting and to co-chair the third session of Indo-Egyptian Joint Commission. Vice President Shri Krishan Kant visited Egypt in May 1998 to attend the 8th Summit of G-15 countries. On the sidelines of the Summit, the Vice-President met President Mubarak and exchanged views on important issues. [39]

[38] http://www.india-emb.org.eg/Section%209/India-Egypt%20Bilateral%20Jan,03.htm
[39] Decaan Herald, 18-November 2005

It is interesting to mention here that Amre Moussa was so active in sustaining the high level dialogue between the two countries. He met with the Prime Minister of India during the NAM Summit in Durban, UNGA in New York. He also met Minister of State for External Affairs Smt Vasundhara Raje during the G-15 Summit in Cairo and NAM Ministerial Meeting in Cartagena.[40]

The year of 1998 saw many Indian officials visiting Egypt and various agreements for cooperation were signed. One of the important visitors was Chief of Army Staff Gen V P Malik who transited through Cairo on 14 December, 1998 on a private visit. During his stay in Cairo, Gen. Malik called on Chief of Egyptian Armed Forces Lt Gen Mogdy Hatata. Additional Secretary (UN) and Joint Secretary (WANA) in the Ministry of external Affairs visited Egypt in August 1998 for pre-NAM consultations. Indian delegation was received by Foreign Minister Amre Moussa.[41]

Culturally, the two elites organized a round table conference on Indo-Egyptian relations. This was held in New Delhi on 16 December 1998. Both Indian and Egyptian intellectual debated the new developments in both West and South Asia and world wise. They also discussed the economic aspects of Indo-Egyptian relations. Deputy Editor of Egyptian Arabic language newspaper 'Al-Ahram' Mr Mahmoud Mourad participated in this Conference.[42] This was a continuation of a tradition, which started in 1966 by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

The institutional mechanism of political dialogue started with The Egyptian Assistant to the Minister of State for Asian Affairs Ambassador Mohamad Nagi M-Ghatriefi visiting India for the first round of annual

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[40] http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Foreign_Policy/FP_1999/Gulf&NAfrica_FP_98-99.html
[41] Ibid; Decaan Herald, 18-November 2005
[42] http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Foreign_Policy/FP_1999/Gulf&NAfrica_FP_98-99.html; the discussed papers in this conference are available in Girijesh Pant (ed.),Indo-Egyptian perspectives Global and regional concerns ,SIS, JNU, New Delhi,1999.

Indo-Egyptian Foreign office consultations on 22nd February 1999; the second round was held at Cairo on 12-13 March 2000. The Indian delegation, which was led by Secretary (West), called on Egyptian Foreign Minister Mr. Amr Moussa.

As a part of political dialogue, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh visited Cairo in February 2001, for the meeting of India-Egypt Joint Commission.[43] This visit brought about healthy debate on Indo-Egyptian relations and the traditional affinity that characterizes these ties was recalled by the three-day visit of Indian Minister. The two sides focused more on economic issues. Among the highlights of Singh's visit was his meeting with Egypt's Minister of the Economy Dr Youssef Boutros Ghali. Singh was received by President Hosni Mubarak and met with the ministers of petroleum, planning and trade. [44]

The debate was initiated by Al Ahram Weekly. The newspaper stated that the two governments were still having a lot of disagreement. According to Al Ahram Weekly:

"Indian government has expressed concern over the nature of the support that Arab countries, including Egypt, offer India's bitter rival Pakistan and Islamist separatists in Kashmir. Egypt and India are apprehensive about each other's definition and approach towards the issue of terrorism -- domestic, regional and global. For its part, Egypt is concerned about the very loose Indian definition of "Islamic terrorism" and about New Delhi's cooperation with Israel on the question of combating terrorism. Another potential bone of contention is the seemingly heavy-handed approach with which the …. (BJP) government in India deals with the rights -- or abuse thereof, as some Arab commentators have insinuated -- of Indian Muslims. "[45]

Another issue which the newspaper referred to was the growing relations between India and Israel. This was an issue which needed Singh to address as the Indo-Egyptian relations during 1990s have been clouded by unclear and unconfirmed reports about the state and volume of military cooperation

[43] http://www.indembcairo.com/
[44] Al-Ahram Weekly On-line ,8 - 14 February 2001,Issue No.520.
[45] Ibid.

between India and Israel. Cairo was concerned that India may have changed its political stance, which was traditionally supportive of the Arab cause regarding the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

In their joint press conference, Singh and Moussa seemed keen to avoid making an issue of these matters. Singh stated clearly that his country's military ties with Israel are primarily trade-oriented, and that New Delhi's support of the "inalienable rights of the Palestinian people" in the form of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and the "Land for Peace" formula is firm.

It was generally believed that collaboration on commercial, economic and social levels will build up political cooperation in the international arena between the two countries. However, Egypt has invited India to participate in political consultations on the future of the Middle East as it is a close neighbor.[46]

The debate on factors that affected Indo-Egyptian relation continued but this time with the participation of a very important political figure: Dr Osama el-Baz, the political adviser for President Mubarak. It seemed that Egyptian leadership wanted India to address the Egyptian concerns regarding nuclear and military cooperation with Israel as a way to push Indo-Egyptian relations to higher levels. Dr Osama el-Baz, told Indian journalists at Cairo university that there ``is no conflict of interest'' between the two nations, which have shared good relations for decades and that India is emerging as ``a major power in Asia'' and is ``making big strides in developing modern technology''. But asked about the unease in Egypt about India's relations with Israel, Dr. el-Baz pointed to the current tensions between Israel and the Arabs, and popular concerns about New Delhi's ties with Tel Aviv. India's military and nuclear cooperation with Israel, ``is viewed with great suspicion by Arabs'', Dr. el-Baz said. All other cooperation between India and Israel was fine, but cooperation in the security arena did raise hackles, he suggested.

[46] Ibid.

El Baz 's words came as a blast according to an Indian journalist but it was reflecting a strong concern in Egypt and Arab world that India's strategic cooperation with Israel hurts Arab interests at a time when the West Asian peace process has collapsed. Other reported statements from India that it wants to cooperate with Israel in the battle against ``Islamic terrorism'' made Egyptians more disappointed. The association of Islam with terrorism, and that India would want to build a coalition with the Jewish state against Islamic countries, are profoundly offensive to the Egyptians coming from a long-standing friend like India According to Dr el-Baz ``If the problem of terrorism is not defined in Islamic terms, Egypt should have no problems in cooperating with India''. The real trick for Egypt and India lies in finding some common political ground. Clearly, greater sensitivity in addressing each other's security concerns could help restore the old warmth in Indo-Egyptian relations.[47]

However, the debate of disagreements between the two governments did not stop them of engaging politically and continuing sharing same views in different regional and international issues .The third round of FOC was held on December 24-26, 2001 in New Delhi. A three-member Egyptian delegation led by Ambassador Adel Abdel Reheem Shalaby, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs, attended the meetings. Ambassador R.M.Abhyankar, Special Secretary (East) led the Indian delegation. An Indian goodwill delegation led by former Minister of External Affairs RL Bhatia visited Egypt between January 27-30 to explain India's stand on the developments in Indo-Pak relations aftermath of December 13 attack on Parliament. The delegation paid a call on President Mubarak and addressed gatherings of intellectuals, scholars, and media personnel.[48]The fourth round of Foreign Office Consultations has been held in February 2003 in Cairo.

[47] The Hindu,March 21, 2001; http://www.hinduonnet.com/2001/03/21/stories/0521134f.htm.
[48] Al-Ahram Weekly , 7 - 13 February 2002

Politically, the two countries continued to share similar views concerning developments in West Asia and worldwide. On the eve of Indian celebration of independence day, August 2004, Indian ambassador to Egypt Rajendra Singh highlighted that "There is identity of views on the important international issues and we (Egypt and India) closely cooperate in international fora" Also, he pointed out that "India was looking forward to President Mubarak's visit as part of efforts made to further promote joint relations". Rajendra asserted the similarity of Indian and Egyptian position towards Palestinian and Iraqi issue. He said that:

"Like the Arab world, India regards President Yasser Arafat as the elected leader of the Palestinian people and a symbol of their cause…We recognize the right of Palestinians to their homeland as their inalienable right. India has supported various moves by the international community in this regard, such as the Quartet Roadmap, the Saudi-initiated Arab Peace Plan, Madrid Peace Plan and Oslo Peace Plan that aim all for a comprehensive and durable political solution. We believe that both Israelis and Palestinians must work for a just, lasting comprehensive settlement and attainment of the vision of two states"[49]

Concerning the shattered situation in Iraq, he reminded that the Indian Parliament passed unanimous resolution deploring the attack on Iraq and called for an early stop. He asserted that India "believe the UN should play a central role in the political and economic reconstruction of Iraq" and that India in favor of early restoration of Iraqi sovereignty. [50]

On October 6,2004,Shri K,Natwar Singh , India's Minister of External Affairs,during his address for diplomats of West and Central Asia as well as intellectuals in Yasser Arafat Conference Hall , Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi, asserted the element of continuity in India's Arab policy when he declared that his government "remains fully supportive of the legitimate aspirations of Palestinian people and committed to their cause for a homeland of their own".

[49] http://www.sis.gov.eg/online/html11/o110824c.htm

[50] Ibid.

In contradiction with Israeli and American pledges, he asserted that the current conflict between Palestinians and Israeli is “essentially political in nature” and that:

> “A just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region can only be achieved through negotiations on the basis of relevant UN Security Council resolutions as well as the “land for Peace” principle leading to two states, Palestine and Israel, living side by side within secure and recognized borders… India regards Yasser Arafat as the leader of Palestinian People and Symbol of its legitimate cause”[51]

Natwar singh stated clearly that “India will not send Indian troops to Iraq” and that “UN has a crucial role to play in the process of political and economic construction of Iraq”. He pointed out that NAM is still relevant in the current situation and that it needs only to change its agenda .He praised the important role of Nasser, Nehru and Tito in initiating the movement in early 1950s and 1960s.[52]

The meeting of Egyptian Foreign Affairs Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit with his Indian counterpart Natwar Singh in Jakarta in April 2005 asserted the lack of satisfaction for the current status of the bilateral relations and the need to strengthen it . Gheit told Natwar Singh that his country wanted to have a renewed focus on its relations with India, which would benefit the two countries and the two regions as a whole. Singh on his part observed that bilateral trade between the two countries was "far below potential". The two ministers decided to hold the next meeting of the Joint Commission in July to enhance bilateral relations[53]

It seems that the logic of globalization is shaping the new mantra for Indo-Egyptian relations. In this mantra, the old days of Nehru and Nasser

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[51] The Text of The speech of Shri Narwar Singh,Minister of External Affairs, October 6,2004,delivered at Jamia Millia Islamia ,New Delhi.

[52] Ibid.

[53] The Hindu, 22 April 2005.

cannot be reinvented and economic cooperation including trade and commerce must be the key driver to modernize this relationship. [54]

Table (1)
Trade relations between India and Egypt (1991-2000)

year	Indian Exports	Indian Imports	Trade surplus for India	Total Trade
1991	81	67	14	148
1992	446	576	-130	1022
1993	476	446	30	922
1994	116	230	-114	346
1995	138	92	46	230
1996	165	63	102	228
1997	208	190	18	398
1998	270	46	224	316
1999	245	148	97	393
2000	281	170	111	451

Source: Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook (Washington, D.C: IMF, 1998 and 2001) cited in Bansidhar Pradhan, Changing Dynamics of India's West Asia policy, International Studies, Vol., 41, No.1, 2004.

To achieve these targets, a huge commercial delegation has exchanged visits to explore the scope and areas of economic cooperation. These delegations included even some ministers from the two sides to facilitate any bureaucratic difficulties which may block the flow of investment between the two countries or prevent the growth of trade between the two sides.

Two examples of these delegations happened in January 2002 and January 2003. Egyptian delegation led by Minister of Trade, Youssef Boutros Ghali, visited Bangalore and Delhi on January 9-16, 2002. The delegation

[54] The Hindu,March 21, 2001; http://www.hinduonnet.com/2001/03/21/stories/0521134f.htm

included the Minister of Industry and Technological Development, Dr. Aly Fahmy El-Saidi, and the Managing Director of the Social Fund for Development, Dr. Hussein El-Gamal, and was accompanied by a large business delegation. It participated in the Partnership Summit 2002 organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in Bangalore on January 10-12. During the summit, Rajendra S Lodha, the president of FICCI pointed out that

"It is time that both countries join hands to realise the tremendous trade potential that exists between the two nations. India is already the 12th largest investor in Egypt, but looking at the synergies that exist between the two nations, this is an under achievement"[55]

He also urged both Indian and Egyptian delegations to"reflect on the unfulfilled promise of Indo-Egyptian commercial exchanges. As we march into the new millennium we should put our heads together to redeem that pledge in full measure ".[56]

Interestingly, The words of Lodha was reflecting a feeling of unhappiness among many Indian and Egyptian officials and intellectuals that the nature and scope of relationship between the two nations in the last three decades does not reflect the potentials and depth of "age-old"," deep rooted" and "unique" relationship. Al Ahram Weekly was more straightforward when it stated that

"The present lacklustre state of affairs is unsatisfactory is a foregone conclusion among Egyptian and Indian commentators and politicians. Both countries' political establishments know all too well that the full potential of economic and political cooperation has yet to be achieved and that Egyptian Indian relations must be infused with new vigour"[57]

[55] http://www.ficci.com/ficci/media-room/speeches-presentations/2002/Jan/jan-egypt-lodha.htm
[56] Ibid.
[57] Al-Ahram Weekly ,8 - 14 February 2001; http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/520/in1.htm.

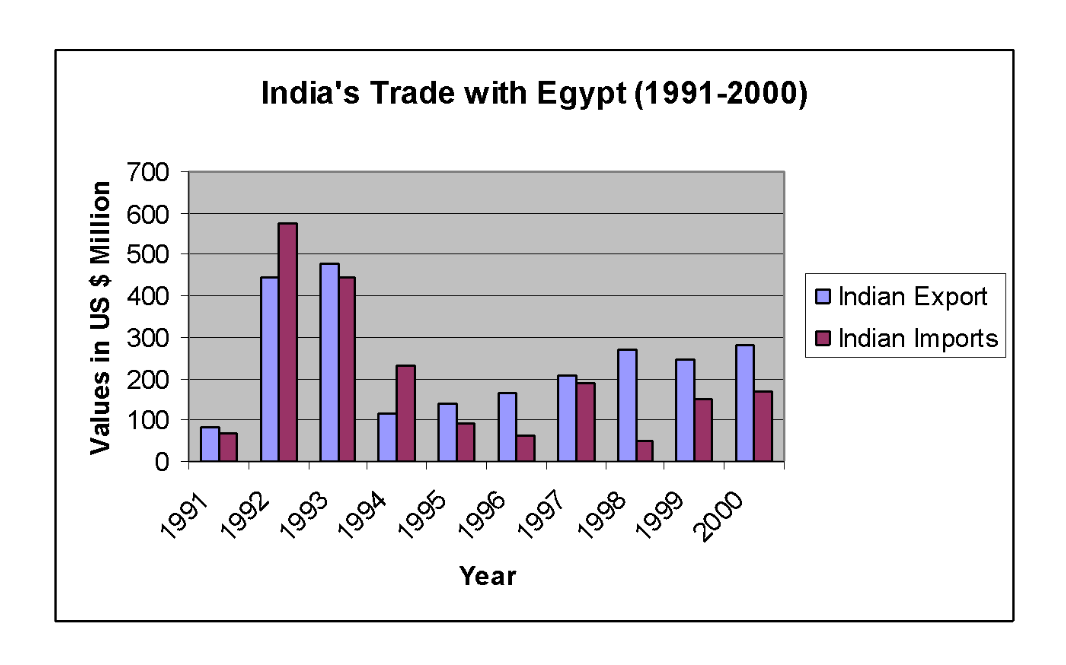


Figure (1)

The delegation held bilateral meetings with External Affairs Minister, Finance Minister, Disinvestments Minister, and Rural and Agro Industries Minister in Delhi from January 13-16 and also called on the Prime Minister. A Business Interaction was held in New Delhi under the umbrella of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The delegation visited several high technology industrial units and training institutes. An MOU between a private Indian company and the Egyptian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology was signed in Bangalore. A full- fledged programme encompassing all aspects of cooperation between the two countries was concluded during the visit the year of 2002 was declared as India year in Egypt[58]

The second example of economic diplomacy came from Indian side in 2003 to give a new force to bilateral relations by positioning India's IT & telecom expertise in Egypt, the Union Communications and IT Minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan visited Egypt on January 11, 2003. Mr Mahajan and the Indian delegation hold detailed discussions with the Speaker of the People's

[58] Al-Ahram Weekly ,2 - 8 May 2002.

Assembly, the Chairman of the Shura Council, the Minister for the People's Assembly and Shura Council Affairs and leading representatives comprising the People's Assembly. During the visit, Mr Mahajan had detailed discussions with the Egyptian Minister for Communications and IT, Mr. Ahmed Nazif (the new Prime Minister of Egypt since 2004). Also, the Indian delegation conducted a series of discussions with leading representatives of the IT & telecom industry in Egypt.

The concrete results of this economic cooperation are shown in the above tables (1& 2) and figures (1 & 2).[59] According to Dr. Kheir El-Din Abdul Latif, Egypt's Ambassador to India stated during his meeting with Delhi Rotari Club at late November 2003, that "India ranks12th among the biggest investors in Egypt with total investments of more than $ 420 million in some 50 projects" [60] in 2005, Dr. Kheir said that the bilateral trade reached above $ 1 billion [61] and the volume of Indian investments in Egypt registered US$ 800 million and it is expected to reach US$ one billion by the end of 2006 and US$ 1.6 billion within the coming few years,[62] However , the highest point in trade relations was in 1992 and 2006 but the total trade is almost the same figure of $ 1 billion.

S.No.	\Year	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
1.	**EXPORT**	462.73	298.24	367.49	444.73	672.43
2.	%Growth		-35.55	23.22	21.02	51.20
3.	India's Total Export	43,826.73	52,719.43	63,842.97	83,535.94	103,090.54
4.	%Growth		20.29	21.10	30.85	23.41
5.	%Share	1.06	0.57	0.58	0.53	0.65
6.	**IMPORT**	99.94	226.57	98.21	152.64	220.44
7.	%Growth		126.70	-56.66	55.43	44.42
8.	India's Total Import	51,413.29	61,412.13	78,149.61	111,517.44	149,165.73

[59] For more details on economic relations see Abdel Hamid Saba Elregal , Economic Cooperation between India and Egypt, RIS-DP-55/2003, Research and Information Systems for the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries ,New Delhi,2003. The paper is available in this link : http://www.ris.org.in/dp55_pap.pdf

[60] http://www.sis.gov.eg/online/html10/o301123i.htm

[61] http://www.indembcairo.com/Ind_Egy_Media/Amb%20Interview,%20Al%20Ahram.htm

[62] http://www.indembcairo.com

9.	%Growth		19.45	27.25	42.70	33.76
10.	%Share	0.19	0.37	0.13	0.14	0.15
11.	**TOTAL TRADE**	562.67	524.81	465.69	597.38	892.87
12.	%Growth		-6.73	-11.27	28.28	49.47
13.	India's Total Trade	95,240.01	114,131.56	141,992.58	195,053.38	252,256.27
14.	%Growth		19.84	24.41	37.37	29.33
15.	%Share	0.59	0.46	0.33	0.31	0.35
16.	**TRADE BALANCE**	362.79	71.67	269.28	292.09	451.98
17.	India's Trade Balance	-7,586.56	-8,692.70	-14,306.65	-27,981.49	-46,075.19
	Exchange rate: (1US$ = Rs.)	*47.6919*	*48.3953*	*45.9513*	*44.9315*	*44.2735*

Note: India’s total imports since 2000-2001 does not include import of Petroleum Products (27100093) and Crude Oil (27090000)

Table (2): India’s trade with Egypt (2001-2006)

Source: http://dgft.delhi.nic.in/

(Ministry of Commerce and Trade, Government of India)

India and Egypt can maximize their economic relations through benefiting from Egypt’s position as a gate for the Arab, European and American market. This could be done by establishing joint ventures to manufacture goods in Egypt, based on Egyptian and Indian raw material, to be exported to these markets. Arab World is a fresh market for softwares and Informatic technology industry. The Arab consumers are looking to softwares which suit their Arab culture and linguistic needs. This can be done if both Indian and Egyptian software industries worked together to provide the Arab market with its special needs .The Indian expertise in IT education and training is highly appreciated and needed in Egypt to train many Egyptian graduates and qualify them for the needs of local and international IT job market. Egyptian government provide so many facilities for investment in private education and can join hands with Indian government to invest in establishing an Egyptian national IT Institute following the successful Indian model of national Informatic technology Institutes. India offers an excellent market for Egyptian capital to invest in and also provide a very reasonable and cheap source of supplying food items which lack in Egyptian local market.

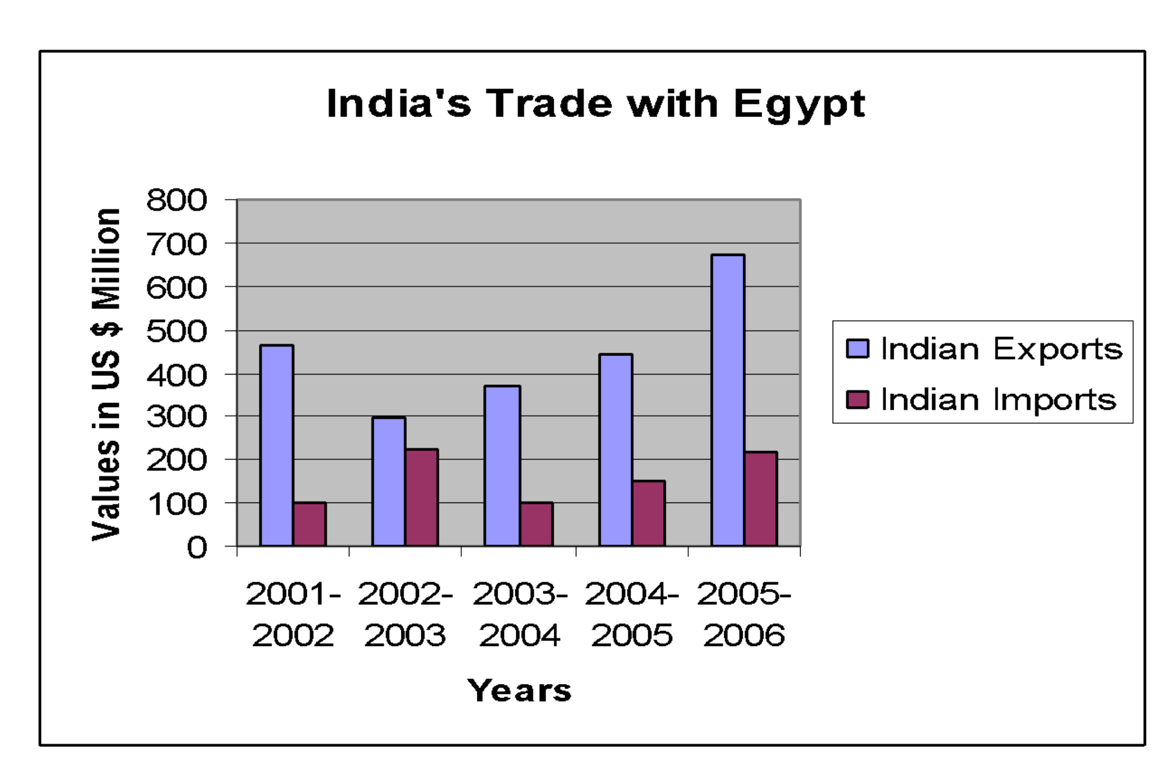


Figure (2): Egypt's trade with India (2001-2006)

Flourishing economic cooperation will be much supported and encouraged if there is a strong political will in the side of both Egyptian and Indian governments to achieve the potentials of Indo-Egyptian relations.

It is likely that the visit of Egyptian President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak to India will restore the traditional warmth of Indo-Egyptian relations and strengthen the cooperation between the two countries in different arenas. The two elites needs to sustain the dialogue between them to assure that each country understand the problems that faces the other country and to coordinate their policies to face the common challenges. An Indo-Egyptian forum is needed to be established to coordinate such meetings between intellectuals, economists, businessmen and journalists and to submit the recommendations of such meetings to both governments. The Forum should hold an annual meeting and monitor the advancement of relations.

Nevertheless, It is expected that India will occupy a key place in the agenda of Egyptian diplomacy in Asia for the next two decades .According to

Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs “the Egyptian diplomacy saves no effort to promote cooperation with the Asian countries, ….The international economic indicators point that the next two decades will witness the evolvement of another Asian power, particularly China and India. Consequently, Egypt, through its diplomacy, shall positively partake with these countries in the political and economic fields with the objective of building bridges of communication to push forward the development process and achieve prosperity.”[63]

For more than half century of independence, both Egypt and India maintained close relations varied from political and economic alliance in 1950s and 1960s to mutual understanding for the regional developments in both West and South Asia, which pushed the two friends far from each other in late 1960s and 1970s.Mubarak’s era saw many efforts to strengthen both economic and political relations. However, the two nations must struggle more to deepen the historical relationship and cultivate new areas of cooperation in political, economic, cultural spheres for the benefits of both nations and for stable and peaceful West and South Asia.

Endnotes

[63] Report on The Egyptian Diplomatic Activities on the Asian Arena in 2005, MFA, Egypt, 2006, http://www.mfa.gov.eg/MFA_Portal/en-GB/Foreign_Policy/International_Relations/egypt_asia2005.htm